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ABSTRACT

A 5-year longitudinal study, still in progress, was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of prekindergarten programs in Texas. The components of the study include a statewide survey of school districts, a case study of 10 schools' prekindergarten programs, and a longitudinal study of 2,000 students enrolled in prekindergarten during the 1989-90 school year. Following guidelines established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the study seeks to discover: (1) the philosophy of prekindergarten programs; (2) how language development is facilitated in prekindergarten classrooms; (3) how prekindergarten classrooms foster the academic development of limited English proficient students; (4) the nature of the prekindergarten environment; (5) the nature of the parent-prekindergarten program relationship; and (6) the relationship between educational outcomes and participation, or non-participation, in a prekindergarten program. It was found that students who attended prekindergarten programs were less likely to be retained, closer to being on grade level in their oral reading, and perceived by their teachers as being more ready for the next grade when compared to students who did not attend a prekindergarten program. Findings and preliminary recommendations in each of the study's focus areas are provided. (MDM)

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ED 366 440

# TEXAS EVALUATION STUDY OF PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

## INTERIM REPORT

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# TEXAS EVALUATION STUDY OF PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

## INTERIM REPORT

**Texas Education Agency**
**Austin, Texas**

**May 1993**

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# STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

## PROCESS

### What are we doing?

- What are developmentally appropriate practices? See page 8.
- Although understanding of developmentally appropriate practices increased, little change occurred in implementation of these practices. See pages 9-13.
  Barriers continue to impede implementation of developmentally appropriate practice. See page 5.
- What do teachers believe about how your children learn? See page 9.
- How are teachers facilitating language development? See page 10.

## OUTCOMES

### What are the results?

**Academic Performance Advantages for Students Who Attend Prekindergarten**

- Reduced Retention Rate
- More likely to read closer to grade level
- Perceived as being "more ready" for next grade

**Academic Performance Disadvantages for Students Who Did Not Attend Prekindergarten**

- Increased special education referral and placement
- Increased speech/communication difficulties
- Higher Retention Rate

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early childhood initiatives, both nationally and in Texas, reflect the increased awareness of the strong influence of early childhood experiences on subsequent school performance. Texas has responded to the need for early childhood education through the inception of over 600 state-funded prekindergarten programs for four-year-old children. In 1989 a study of the general state of prekindergarten education in Texas, from both an implementation and outcome point of view, was initiated by the Texas Education Agency.

This report highlights findings from the second phase of the evaluation study. It verifies and updates earlier findings regarding the implementation of prekindergarten programs. It also reports for the first time preliminary findings on program outcomes.

The guidelines established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) continue to provide the framework for the examination of developmentally appropriate practices in prekindergarten programs. These guidelines were formulated in response to the widespread use of inappropriate formal teaching techniques for young children, and the overemphasis on achievement of narrowly defined academic skills.

Although administrators and instructional staff demonstrated increased awareness of developmentally appropriate practices, barriers continued to impede the implementation of these practices. Administrators and teachers had difficulty transferring knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices into the classroom. As one teacher shared, "I know what the practices are, but I don't know how to do it."

However, findings regarding the outcomes of prekindergarten programs indicate positive trends in academic performance for children who participated in prekindergarten programs. Students who attended prekindergarten were: 1) less likely to be retained; 2) closer to being on grade level in their oral reading, and 3) perceived by their teachers as being more ready for the next grade. On the other hand, students who were eligible for prekindergarten, but did not participate: 1) were more frequently referred and placed in special education programs; 2) required more speech or communication services; and 3) had a higher retention rate.

Although findings from the longitudinal study can only be considered as possible trends and cannot be solely attributed to the effect of attending prekindergarten, they do suggest that prekindergarten can have a positive effect on students' school performance. With the development of high quality, developmentally appropriate prekindergarten programs, these trends could become even stronger.

To meet this goal, preliminary recommendations were made in the following areas: 1) provision of staff development to administrators and instructional staff at both the preservice and inservice level; 2) development of reflective strategies and evaluation skills of administrators and instructional staff to guide implementation practices in classrooms; 3) recognition and acceptance of developmentally appropriate early childhood environments in elementary schools; 4) identification of programs which are demonstrating exemplary developmentally appropriate practices in order to provide mentor networks and observation sites; and 5) participation in prekindergarten by all children who are eligible for the program. A full technical report, detailing data sources, analyses, and early findings that formed the basis for these preliminary recommendations, will be available from the Texas Education Agency Publication Office in the fall of 1993.

# BACKGROUND

Early childhood initiatives, both nationally and in Texas, reflect the increased awareness of the strong influence of early childhood experiences on subsequent school performance. The priority given to the education and care of young children through programs such as Head Start by the current national administration denotes the critical importance of investing in young children. Increased commitment of public funds for early childhood programs has resulted in the implementation of such programs.

Texas has responded to the need for early childhood education through the inception of state-funded prekindergarten programs for three- and four-year old children who are limited English proficient or from a low-income family. Over 600 Texas school districts are currently providing prekindergarten programs to four-year-old children.

In 1989 a five-year evaluation study of prekindergarten for four-year-olds was initiated. A report summarizing the findings and recommendations from the initial phase of the study was published in September 1992, and is available from the Agency's Publication Distribution Office (*Texas Evaluation Study of Prekindergarten Programs: Preliminary Findings*, TEA Publication No. GE2 091 08). Following is a brief synopsis of the major preliminary findings.

Although administrators and teachers in prekindergarten programs in Texas were receptive to the concept of developmentally appropriate practices, little evidence of their implementation was apparent. Several barriers were impeding the implementation of these practices.

## Barriers Impeding Implementation of Developmentally Appropriate Practices

- First, prekindergarten programs did not appear to be grounded upon sound beliefs/theories about how young children learn, nor does a framework exist at the state level to identify program quality standards.

- Second, staff typically had not received the training in early childhood development/education that is necessary to implement developmentally appropriate programs. When state resources were allocated for program implementation, no funds were designated for staff training. In addition, state legislation as defined in Texas Education Code §16.052 provides districts with only a minimal number of days for in-service training for all staff. District in-service training did not necessarily include specialized early childhood training. In programs where instructional assistants were available, training specifically for them in early childhood education was minimal or nonexistent.

- Third, the teacher/child ratio of 1:22 exceeded a group size that allows for individualized instruction and adequate supervision of young children.

- Fourth, the programs for limited English proficient students appeared to focus on moving children into English, rather than ensuring that children first had a strong foundation in their native language.

- Finally, parents, although strongly supportive of prekindergarten, did not appear to have a partnership relationship with the districts.

To address the barriers impeding implementation of developmentally appropriate practices, recommendations in the following broad areas were made:

1) provide staff development at both the pre-service and in-service level;

2) lower the mandated class size ratios; and

3) develop an early childhood education framework, including identification of program quality standards, by the Agency.

This report highlights findings from the second phase of the evaluation study. It verifies and updates earlier findings regarding the implementation of prekindergarten programs. It also reports for the first time preliminary findings on program outcomes.

# WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE STUDY?

The overall purpose of the five-year study is to evaluate effectiveness of prekindergarten programs in Texas for the first time since the statewide inception of such programs in 1986. The need exists to study the general state of prekindergarten education from both an implementation and outcome point of view. This phase of the study continues to examine program implementation practices. A variety of factors may contribute to program effectiveness such as staff qualifications, materials, and/or administrative support. In order to determine or understand program effectiveness, program practices must first be understood. Two components of the study, statewide surveys and a case study, are directed toward a better understanding of program implementation.

Understanding how children change is critical to program accountability. The real test of prekindergarten program effectiveness is achievement and personal success in later grades. Program outcomes must be assessed over time. The longitudinal study component examines the effects of prekindergarten on student performance. Preliminary findings from the first three years of the longitudinal study component are presented in this report.

## Components of the Study

1) A **statewide survey** of districts and campuses focusing upon prekindergarten program characteristics, implementation, and parents' perceptions of the programs

2) A **case study** of ten schools providing prekindergarten programs to study assessment of students and use of developmentally appropriate practices

3) A **longitudinal study** of 2000 students enrolled in prekindergarten during the 1989-90 school year, in relation to a comparison group, through the 1993-94 school year

# How was the study conducted?

## STATEWIDE SURVEY

Questionnaires were developed focusing on parents' perceptions of prekindergarten programs. In addition to the 10 districts that are participating in the case study component, one district from each of the 20 educational service center regions was randomly selected to participate in the parent survey. Parents of children in prekindergarten programs from two classrooms within each district were invited to complete a survey. Information obtained from this survey described parents' satisfaction, involvement, and relationship with the prekindergarten program. Over 700 parents completed the survey.

## CASE STUDY

The case study was conducted as a cooperative effort between the Texas Education Agency (Agency), Division of Policy Planning and Evaluation and INter-REActive Learning (INREAL) Outreach Education Center, at the University of Colorado, a contractor selected through the Request for Proposal process. The primary foci of the case study were 1) to verify earlier findings regarding developmentally appropriate program practices and provide a more in-depth understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of prekindergarten programs, 2) to identify practices being employed to facilitate first and second language development, and 3) to describe the nature of the learning environments. Site visits were made to the 17 classrooms that participated in the initial phase of the study to collect data through:

- observations of prekindergarten classrooms
- questionnaires to district staff and administrators
- interviews with administrators, prekindergarten staff, parents of children participating in the prekindergarten programs, and parents of children who had participated in prekindergarten the previous year.

## LONGITUDINAL STUDY

A longitudinal study of approximately 2000 students who were enrolled in prekindergarten in twenty school districts in Texas was initiated in spring 1990 with the collection of baseline data. The following school year, a comparison group of approximately 600 kindergarten students who had been eligible for prekindergarten but had not enrolled in the program was randomly selected from the same twenty school districts participating in the longitudinal component. The progress of both groups of students has been followed annually through a questionnaire completed by the students' classroom teachers or elementary counselors. This report presents information on these students through the 1991-92 school year. Table One provides students demographic characteristics for the prekindergarten and comparison group.

## TABLE 1
## Student Demographic Characteristics

| CHARACTERISTICS | PREKINDERGARTEN GROUP Percent of Students (N=1499) | COMPARISON GROUP Percent of Students (N=396) |
|---|---|---|
| **Ethnicity:** | | |
| Native American or Alaskan Indian | 0.2 | 0 |
| Asian | 3 | 3 |
| African American | 28 | 24 |
| Hispanic | 61 | 56 |
| White, not Hispanic | 8 | 16 |
| **Gender:** | | |
| Male | 48 | 48 |
| Female | 52 | 52 |
| **Free/Reduced-Price Lunch** | 85 | 85 |
| **Limited English Proficient** | 35 | 35 |
| **Free/Reduced-Price Lunch & Limited English Proficient** | 32 | 32 |
| **Migrant** | 3 | 2 |
| **Language:** | | |
| Spanish | 34 | 33 |
| English | 63 | 64 |
| Other | 3 | 3 |
| **Grade:** | | |
| First | 97 | 96 |
| Transitional/Developmental First | 3 | 2 |
| Kindergarten | 0.3 | 3 |
| **Parent Child Lives With:** | | |
| Mother | 25 | 32 |
| Father | 1 | 1 |
| Both Parents | 70 | 63 |
| Guardian | 0.4 | 1 |
| Relative | 4 | 3 |

# What are "developmentally appropriate practices?"

The guidelines established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) continue to provide the framework for the examination of developmentally appropriate practices in prekindergarten programs (1984). The NAEYC guidelines were formulated in response to the widespread use of inappropriate formal teaching techniques for young children, and the overemphasis on achievement of narrowly defined academic skills. These guidelines have received national recognition and acceptance throughout the field of early care and education.

The concept of "developmental appropriateness" as set forth by NAEYC, has two dimensions: 1) age appropriateness and 2) individual appropriateness. The first dimension entails using knowledge of child development to identify a range of meaningful behaviors, activities, and materials for a specific age group. Reference to the second dimension results in classrooms containing materials and activities that correspond to the children's individual interests, strengths, and experiences. To specifically address the diverse backgrounds of Texas prekindergarten children, a third dimension has been added: 3) language and cultural appropriateness. This dimension recognizes the importance of using the child's primary language in the classroom and providing experiences that reflect the child's culture. For the purposes of this study the term "developmentally appropriate practices" will reflect all three dimensions.

**Classrooms with teachers who employ developmentally appropriate practices look like this:**

- Children are engaged in active, not passive, learning experiences, much of which are child initiated, based on activities and materials that are real, concrete, and relevant to the lives of young children.
- Classrooms contain materials and activities for a wide range of developmental interests and abilities.
- Child-initiated, child-directed, teacher-supported play is the most natural way for young children to learn, and is an integral part of the program day.
- Children develop language and communication skills by using language to express needs, insights, excitement, and to solve problems through interaction with adults and peers.
- Children spend most of the time working individually or in small groups.
- Parents and others from the community are involved with the program (NAEYC, 1987).

***The NAEYC guidelines were formulated in response to the widespread use of inappropriate formal teaching techniques for young children . . .***

# What is the philosophy of prekindergarten programs?

*NAEYC CRITERIA*

Decisions about appropriate practices derive from a particular belief system or theoretical framework about how children learn and develop. Informed early childhood educators endorse an interactive, constructive process of learning rather than a behaviorist approach where the child is viewed as passive in the learning process which is directed by the teacher and shaped by the environment. Following is a summary of the basic tenets of constructive learning. Children construct knowledge through active experimentation which is analogous to research. "Constructive errors" are necessary to mental development. Children learn through social interaction with adults and other children. Children's learning reflects a cycle that begins with interest, and moves to exploration, inquiry, and personal meaning. Children's development and learning are characterized by individual variations, therefore decisions about curriculum must be as individualized as possible (NAEYC, 1991, pp. 24-27).

*FINDINGS*

- When questioned about how young children learn, teachers displayed a basic understanding of an interactive constructive process of learning; however, classroom practices suggested that teachers had difficulty transferring this knowledge into the classroom.
- Fewer than half of the prekindergarten staffs received staff training specifically on developmentally appropriate practices.
- More than 50 percent of the prekindergarten session was spent in teacher-directed activities.
- Child-initiated activities were essentially restricted to learning center activities which comprised approximately 25% of the session.
- Teachers' beliefs about learning with respect to teacher-directed instructional activities that had occurred in their classroom reflected a behaviorist theory of learning.
- Teacher's beliefs about learning during the least teacher-directed activities (e.g. learning centers or free choice time) were predominantly constructivist in why the activity was provided, and how children were learning during the activity; but reflected a behaviorist viewpoint regarding their role in supporting learning during the activity.

*PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS*

- Develop an early childhood policy framework at the state level which identifies quality program standards and practices.
- Provide staff development to instructional staff and administrators in: 1) understanding the difference between constructivist and behaviorist learning theories and implications for classroom practice; 2) developing self-reflection strategies to guide practice; and 3) learning the literature and research on developmentally appropriate practices.
- Support instructional staff in visiting and observing model early childhood education programs which implement constructivist-based theory.
- Provide staff development on management techniques and schedule design to support more child-initiated activities.
- Support administrators and staff in self-study and self-evaluation to develop practices based on informed belief systems.

# How is language development facilitated in prekindergarten classrooms?

*NAEYC CRITERIA*

Children acquire language and communication skills by using and hearing language. Listening experiences, when they are meaningful, enrich language, but are not the basis of language learning. Therefore, adults must provide many varied opportunities for children to communicate.

Additionally, teachers of young children move among small groups and individuals to facilitate the children's involvement with materials by asking genuine questions, offering suggestions, and adding more complex materials or ideas to the situation. Teachers accept that there is more than one right answer (NAEYC, 1987, p. 55).

Language development is fundamental to learning, and language development requires social interaction. Social interaction with peers, as well as with adults, is essential to the development of real understanding as well as language use (NAEYC, 1991, pp. 26-27).

*FINDINGS*

- Teachers and instructional assistants talked more than the children in the classrooms.
- Most of the time the children were required to be responsive to adult requests and directions. During time-sampled intervals, suggestive and directive statements were the strategies most widely used by teachers and instructional assistants to facilitate language development (42%).
- Reflecting, restating, and expanding, the multifaceted strategy best suited to support language development in young children, was used least by teachers and instructional assistants (6%).
- During time-sampled intervals, the amount of child-to-child talk was only about 10 percent of all verbal interactions. Statements such as "If you're talking to each other, you won't be learning.", suggested that teachers do not understand how much language children learn from each other while they are talking.

*PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS*

- Provide staff development to administrators and instructional staff on natural, interaction-based approaches to language development, including:
  1) verbal strategies to best support language and cognitive development;
  2) the implementation of a balance between child-talk and teacher-talk;
  3) the implementation of more child-to-child talk;
  4) the importance of nonverbal, as well as verbal communication.
- Increase the amount of child-talk in the classrooms.

# How are prekindergarten classrooms fostering academic development of limited English proficient students?

### *NAEYC/BILINGUAL CRITERIA*

Curriculum respects and supports individual, cultural, and linguistic diversity (NAEYC 1991; p. 30). Multicultural and nonsexist experiences, materials, and equipment should be provided for children of all ages (NAEYC, 1987, p. 7).

If academic development of minority students is the goal, then students must be encouraged to acquire a conceptual foundation in their native language to facilitate the acquisition of English academic skills. Spanish instruction that develops Spanish (pre)reading and (pre)writing skills is not just developing Spanish skills; it is also developing a deeper conceptual and linguistic proficiency that is strongly related to the development of literacy in the majority language (English) (Cummins, 1989; pp. 44, 49).

### *FINDINGS*

- Cultural diversity was primarily supported through celebration of cultural holidays, instructional activities, and communicating with parents in English and Spanish.
- Linguistically and culturally reflective materials received the lowest rating in both developmental quality and quantity of all prekindergarten materials.
- Prekindergarten classrooms emphasized the use of English as the language of instruction.
- In language samples collected in classrooms using a bilingual approach to instruction, 75 percent of the teachers' utterances were English, 19 percent were Spanish, and 6 percent were a combination of English and Spanish.

### *PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS*

- Significantly increase the quality and quantity of culturally and linguistically relevant materials in the classrooms.
- Provide staff development in the theoretical foundations underlying the principles of first and second language development.
- Increase the usage of the students' primary language as the language of instruction.
- Provide staff development to instructional staff and administrators in first and second language instructional techniques and strategies for supporting more teacher- and child-talk in Spanish.

# What is the prekindergarten environment like?

*NAEYC CRITERIA*

Children develop understanding of concepts about themselves, others, and the world around them through observation, interacting with people and real objects, and seeking solutions to concrete problems. A common practice in early childhood classrooms for providing such experiences is the establishment of learning centers and equipping each area with materials. Learning activities and materials should be concrete, real, and relevant to the lives of young children. Teachers provide a variety of materials (NAEYC, 1987, pp. 4-5, 56). Age-appropriate materials and equipment of sufficient quantity, variety, and durability are readily available to children (NAEYC, 1984, p. 26).

*FINDINGS*

- Most classrooms had positive climates with teachers and instructional assistants who were warm, supportive, and communicated genuine respect and caring for the children.
- Analyses of teachers' beliefs and actual classroom practices revealed that the most developmentally appropriate activities took place in learning centers where children were allowed to play, experiment, and interact according to their own choices and interests.
- Over 50% of the classrooms had five or fewer center areas.
- Only one of 17 classrooms provided unlimited access to learning centers.
- Although there was a preponderance of commercially-made materials in the classrooms and a large amount of adult-made materials, there were relatively few child-made and culturally and linguistically reflective materials in the prekindergarten classrooms.
- For the most part, with some exceptions, the prekindergarten classroom environments looked like primary classrooms.
- The quality and quantity of indoor and outdoor physical space generally was adequate although three sites were severely lacking in the quality and quantity of outdoor space and equipment.

*PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS*

- Make prekindergarten classrooms become more like an early childhood environment rather than a primary classroom.
- Increase the amount of child-made materials in the classrooms
- Increase the quantity and quality of learning centers in the classrooms.
- Create classrooms that reflect the children in them so that their cultures, languages, and interests are readily apparent.

# What is the relationship between parents and prekindergarten programs?

### *NAEYC CRITERIA*

In high quality early childhood programs, families as well as children benefit (NAEYC, 1987, p. 12). Parents and other family members are encouraged to be involved in the program in various ways (NAEYC, 1984, p. 12). An important part of early childhood education is the continuity between programs as children move from one program to another (NAEYC, 1987, p. 60-61).

### *FINDINGS*

- Results from a statewide parent survey indicated that 99 percent of the parents who responded believed that prekindergarten had helped their child.
- Of the parents who responded to a statewide parent survey, 76 percent felt that their opinions were valued by the school.
- According to parents interviewed during site visits, the greatest benefit of prekindergarten was the positive effect the children's excitement about learning had on the parents and other children in the family. As one parent shared, "My child doesn't want to miss school; she plays teacher all the time."
- Other positive outcomes of the prekindergarten program cited by the parents were: 1) more talk about school at home; 2) more parent participation in their child's learning, both in and out of school; 3) creation of family pride; and, 4) learning of new information about parenting.
- Many parents recognized the importance of parent involvement. One parent said, "The more involved the parents get, the better the kids like school."
- Results from the statewide parent survey indicated that parents whose primary language was Spanish were more likely to be involved in the prekindergarten program if their child's teacher spoke Spanish.
- Findings from the longitudinal study component indicated that during first grade, parents of students who attended prekindergarten had significantly more contacts with the school than parents of students who did not attend prekindergarten.
- When asked what their children were not learning that they wanted them to learn, some parents reported that learning in the areas of real world skills and language could be stronger.
- Parents of children who had participated in prekindergarten felt that they had experienced more ongoing communication with the prekindergarten teacher than the kindergarten teacher. These parents were also unhappy about the reduced amount of Spanish used with their children in the kindergarten classes even though these classrooms were using a bilingual approach to instruction.

### *PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS*

- Provide information/training to parents on state-of-the-art early childhood practices.
- Make efforts to reach and involve all parents, particularly when language barriers exist between teachers and parents.
- Provide staff development to administrators and instructional staff on building family-school partnerships.
- Develop partnerships in which parents and educators are equal partners in promoting children's learning.
- Continue to communicate (orally and in writing) in Spanish, when appropriate.
- Make efforts to maintain communication with parents as children move to the next grade level.

# How do educational outcomes compare for children who participated in prekindergarten in relationship to children who were eligible for the program but did not participate?

Approximately 2,000 prekindergarten students were identified during the spring of 1990, and another 600 students were identified as a comparison group in the spring of 1991, to participate in a longitudinal study designed to assess the impact of prekindergarten programs with regard to the regular education program. The progress of both groups of students has been followed annually through a questionnaire completed by the student's teachers or elementary school counselors. Preliminary findings on these students' educational outcomes through the 1991-92 school year are presented below:

Within the remainder of this report all differences that are reported between students who participated in prekindergarten and students who were eligible for prekindergarten, but did not participate, meet the criteria for statistical significance. However, due to a large amount of unexplained variability between the two groups, these findings can only be interpreted as possible trends at this time. Factors other than participation in prekindergarten could contribute to the difference found between these two groups.

## *PRELIMINARY FINDINGS*

- Significantly more students who did not attend prekindergarten were referred and placed in special education programs.
- More students in the comparison group required speech or communication services than students who attended prekindergarten. Within both groups, males needed more speech or communication services than females.
- Teachers reported that students who attended prekindergarten were closer to being on grade level in their oral reading.
- Overall, former prekindergarten students were more likely to be promoted to the next grade. In addition, significantly more males in the prekindergarten group than in the comparison group were promoted.
- A greater number of the language arts' essential elements were mastered by males from prekindergarten programs than males who did not attend prekindergarten. No differences were found between females from the two groups.
- Teachers perceived students who had attended prekindergarten to be more ready for the next grade than students who had not been in prekindergarten.

# COMMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Research strongly suggests that quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood programs can significantly reduce poor school performance for disadvantaged students. Texas has responded to this finding through the inception of prekindergarten programs for three- and four-year old children who are limited English proficient or from a low-income family. However, the prekindergarten movement came about at such an accelerated pace, nationally as well as locally, that curriculum alignment often followed the so-call "push-down" model. Elements of first grade were pushed down to kindergarten, and elements of kindergarten (and perhaps even first grade) were pushed down to prekindergarten. This problem was compounded by the lack of well-trained, certified early childhood teachers to provide instruction in prekindergarten classrooms.

In 1989 a five-year evaluation study of prekindergarten for four-year-olds was initiated in Texas. Findings from the initial phase of this study indicated that although administrators and teachers in prekindergarten programs in Texas were receptive to the concept of developmentally appropriate practices, little evidence of implementation was apparent. Although administrators and instructional staff demonstrated increased awareness of developmentally appropriate practices in the second phase of the study, findings in this report identified the following barriers that continue to impede the implementation of these practices:

- First, although teachers appeared to have acquired a basic understanding of how young children learn and the concept of developmentally appropriate practices, they continued to have difficulty translating this knowledge into classroom practices. As one teacher shared, "I know what the practices are, but don't know how to do it."
- Second, teachers did not understand or implement the strategies best suited to facilitate language development of young children.
- Third, the programs for limited English proficient students continued to focus on moving children into English, rather than ensuring that children first had a strong foundation in their native language.
- Fourth, classrooms continued to mirror the environment of elementary classrooms rather than reflecting the atmosphere of early childhood environments.
- Finally, parents, although strongly supportive of prekindergarten, did not appear to have a strong partnership relationship with the districts.

Findings from the longitudinal study component indicated positive trends in academic performance for children who participated in prekindergarten programs. Students from prekindergarten programs were:

1) less likely to be retained;

2) closer to being on grade level in their oral reading, and

3) perceived by their teachers as being more ready for the next grade.

On the other hand, students who were eligible for prekindergarten, but did not participate:

1) were more frequently referred and placed in special education programs;

2) required more speech or communication services; and

3) had a higher retention rate.

Although the findings from the longitudinal study can only be considered as possible trends and cannot be solely attributed to the effect of attending prekindergarten, they do suggest that prekindergarten can have a positive effect on students' school performance. With the development of high quality, developmentally appropriate prekindergarten programs, these trends could become even stronger. To address the barriers impeding implementation of developmentally appropriate practices in prekindergarten programs, preliminary recommendations in the following broad areas were made:

- Provision of staff development to administrators and instructional staff at both the preservice and inservice level.
- Development of reflective strategies and evaluation skills of administrators and instructional staff to guide implementation practices in the classroom.
- Recognition and acceptance of developmentally appropriate early childhood environments in elementary schools.
- Identification of programs which are demonstrating exemplary developmentally appropriate practices to provide mentor networks and observations sites for developing programs.
- Participation in prekindergarten by all children who are eligible for the program.

A full technical report, detailing data sources, analyses, and early findings that formed the basis for these preliminary recommendations, will be available Fall 1993 from the Texas Education Agency Publications Office.

***Positive trends in academic performance for children who participated in prekindergarten programs could possibly become stronger with the development of high quality, developmentally appropriate prekindergarten programs.***

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## TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a nonsegregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

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## TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 AS AMENDED; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; TITLE IX, EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED; AMERICAN DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990; AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1991.

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